

day and night. 17. 1. 1910

Drawn 171

From 4.10

71.200 145 04503

Curios and Relics

Furniture

Daybed

Made by Thomas Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Mrs. Emma Churchill, being duly sworn, states that her grandfather, Richard Vernon, lived near Elizabethtown in Hardin County, Kentucky, and that he had Thomas Lincoln, (the father of Abraham Lincoln) who was living at Elizabethtown and working at his trade as carpenter, cabinet maker and wheelwright, make several pieces of furniture for him.

She states that the said Thomas Lincoln made a cherry bed and a walnut chest for her grandfather and that neither of said pieces has ever been sold. She well remembers seeing these two pieces of furniture in her grandfathers home and later in the the home of her aunt, Mrs. Lou Vernon Dodge. Her grandfather, Richard Vernon, told her that Thomas Lincoln made these pieces about the year 1807 and he kept them in his own home until his death when they became the property of his daughter, Mrs. Lou Vernon Dodge, who owned them until her death in the year 1908. Before she died Mrs. Dodge gave the two pieces to her friend, Mrs. Mary Sweets, who lives at Elizabethtown, Ky. to become her property after her death and Mrs. Sweets has had the bed and chest in her possession ever since that time.

Mrs. Churchill further states that she can positively identify the bed and chest as the same pieces which were owned in her family for two generations and later by Mrs. Sweets as the same pieces which her grandfather told her were made by Thomas Lincoln more than one hundred years ago and that these pieces of furniture have never been out of the possession and ownership of the three parties named herein.

Mrs. Emma Churchill

Subscribed and sworn to before me by Mrs. Emma Churchill this October 17, 1927.

L. K. English
Notary Public Hardin County, Ky
My commission expires Feby. 19, 1928



24

Elizabeth Town N.Y.

Rev L. A. Warren

My dear Sir:

I have
in my possession to pieces
of furniture made by Thomas
Lincoln father of Abe
Lincoln. One piece is
a day bed made of cherry
solid head and foot
board. very pretty.

The other piece is a sugar
chest of Walnut.

May 2, 1928

Mrs. Mary Sweets
Elizabethtown, Ky.

My dear Mrs. Sweets:

I have your request before me and would suggest that you send me at your earliest convenience a photograph of the articles made by Thomas Lincoln which you have for sale and also include the affidavits which prove them to be genuine.

While I do not know of anyone just now who might be interested, I expect to attend next week a meeting of the Illinois Historical Society at Springfield and possibly might find someone there who would like to purchase the pieces of furniture of which you speak.

With kindest regards to you and your friends in Elizabethtown, I am

Most sincerely yours,

LAW:VL

Secretary,
Lincoln Historical Research Foundation.

John Lincoln Currier

April 7, 1929

Mrs. J. W. Sweets
Elizabethtown, Ky.

My dear Mrs. Sweets:

I regret very much the inability of our foundation to make such contacts as would allow you to dispose of your Lincoln curios.

The last person with whom I corresponded about the items was the secretary of the Illinois Historical Society, and I enclose the letter which I received from her.

If you are successful in disposing of them I should like very much to know who is the purchaser as I try and keep a list of all Lincoln curios.

Please remember me to my Elizabethtown friends.

Respectfully yours,

Director
Lincoln Historical Research Foundation

LAW/S



West Baden, Indiana,

Elizabeth town Ky
Apr 3rd

Dear Brother Warren

Some
time ago I sent you
pictures of my Lincoln
Bed and chest - also
The App - I would
like so much for you
to please return them
as I have a chance to
show them

Yours

Hoping this finds you
and Yous all well

Respect-fully

Mrs J. H. Sweets



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1512

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

February, 1964

FURNITURE MADE BY THOMAS LINCOLN

In *Lincoln Lore*, Number 1476, February 1961, the corner cupboards made by President Abraham Lincoln's father were described at some length. The third paragraph of that article stated that "there are several . . . pieces of cabinet work still extant in Kentucky, Indiana and possibly Illinois, which Thomas Lincoln is known to have constructed. These include cherry spool beds, mantelpieces, desks, bookcases, chests and sideboards." This issue of *Lincoln Lore* will feature some of these miscellaneous products of Thomas Lincoln's workshop.

Another issue of *Lincoln Lore*, Number 513, has related in some detail how Lincoln worked as a carpenter between the years 1803 and 1809. In fact, there is a well authenticated tradition that the President's father owned the best set of carpenter tools in Hardin county. Exactly when Thomas Lincoln served his apprenticeship as a carpenter and cabinetmaker is not known, but by the time he became of age he was doing rough carpentry and making plain furniture.

It may be a reasonable supposition that Thomas Lincoln learned his trade in the shop of the Reverend Jesse Head. This was the Methodist minister who performed the marriage ceremony uniting Nancy Hanks and Thomas Lincoln on June 12, 1806. When Thomas Lincoln lived with his widowed mother in Washington County, Kentucky, one of his neighbors was Jesse Head whose fifty acre farm on Read Run, some distance from the county seat town of Springfield, was located in "the midst of the Lincolns and Berrys . . ." Jesse Head was born on June 10, 1768, in Frederick County, Maryland and was some eight years older than Thomas Lincoln.

This energetic pioneer was constantly engaged in cabinetmaking, in deposition taking and in preaching. As recognition of his skill as a cabinetmaker increased, he eventually moved his shop to Springfield. Jesse Head became sufficiently established as a cabinetmaker to have three orphan boys apprenticed to him. One record reveals that on November 7, 1797, David Redmond, the orphan of Alexander Redmond, was bound to Jesse Head to learn the art of a cabinetmaker. The boy was to remain with

Head for three and one-half years, and at the end of his apprenticeship he would receive from the master craftsman a joiner, foreplane, jack and smoothing plane.

An interesting court order dated May 9, 1809 stipulates "that Jesse Head be and he is hereby appointed to make and hang shutters to the lower windows in the Court House."

A small mahogany bureau measuring 18" x 24", the product of Jesse Head's cabinetmaking shop, is today extant. It was made in 1836 for the uncle of Mrs. M. E. Sharp (1921) of Mercer County, Kentucky.

This information, documentary and otherwise, fairly well established Jesse Head as a cabinetmaker; and the fact that Thomas Lincoln lived in Washington County and was for awhile (Fall of 1786 to the turn of the century) a close neighbor of Jesse Head, would provide him with ample time and opportunity to learn the trade of a carpenter and cabinetmaker.

The following pieces of Lincoln furniture, exclusive of cupboards, are known to be extant and are listed here as examples of Thomas Lincoln's handiwork:



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Cherry hutch made by Thomas Lincoln for Richard Vernon about the year 1807. Now owned by Mrs. L. B. Hoke of Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

AUCTION
TUESDAY, MAY 24, 1:30 p. m.
Antiques, Furniture, China, Silverware

We have contracted with the McCullum Realty Co. to sell all of personal property of the late Mary E. Sweets at her home located at 212 Mulberry Street, Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

One Cherry Day Bed

One of the finer pieces we will sell is a Cherry Day Bed which was made by Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham Lincoln, authenticity is supported by original affidavit executed by Mrs. Emma Churchill, granddaughter of Richard Vernon for whom the bed was originally made by the said Thomas Lincoln.

Antiques

Love Seat with two chairs to match, pair figurines, clock, China, candelabra, fruit bowl, vases, water service with 2 goblets, walnut table, spinning wheel, china, glass, and other small items.

Furniture

Desk, 3 drawers, chest of drawers, 2 trunks, day bed, ball tree, 2 wash stands, 2 beds, 2 book cases, vanity dresser, 5 large rugs, radio, electric refrigerator, lamp, dining room suite, breakfast table, coal range, kitchen cabinet, china cabinet, china, silverware (sterling), walnut table, 2 swings, 2 mirrors, dresser, lawn chairs, washing machine, picture frames, number of chairs, dishes, and many small items not mentioned.

First-Hardin National Bank,
 Exec. of Mary E. Sweets

McCullum Realty Co.
 H. ED. McCULLUM, JR., Auctioneer
 Phone 4232 Elizabethtown, Ky.
 "We Have Sold in 24 States and Canada"

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
 Advertisement poster of Mary E. Sweets' sale announcing that the cherry day bed made by Thomas Lincoln will be sold at auction on May 24, 1949.

1. Cherry Hutch
Owned by Mrs. L. B. Hoke, Elizabethtown, Kentucky.
2. Cherry Day Bed
Owned by Mr. Howes Mead, Paintsville, Kentucky.
3. Cherry Sugar Chest
Owned by J. S. McMurtry, Lawrenceburg, Kentucky.
4. Pine Mantlepiece
Exhibited in the Lincoln Room of the Armor Center Officer's Open Mess, Fort Knox, Kentucky.
5. Cherry Desk and Bookcase
Owned by Mr. and Mrs. Townsend Taylor, South Bend, Indiana
6. Cherry Chest of Drawers
Owned by Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

Affidavits or descriptive information concerning the individual pieces of Thomas Lincoln's cabinetwork follow:

1. Cherry Hutch

Affidavit

"Mrs. Emma Churchill, being duly sworn, states that her grandfather, Richard Vernon, lived near Elizabethtown in Hardin County, Kentucky, and that he had Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham Lincoln, who was also living near Elizabethtown and working at his trade as carpenter, cabinet maker and wheelwright, make several pieces of furniture for him.

"She states that the said Thomas Lincoln made a cherry chest or side-

board for her grandfather. She well remembers seeing this piece of furniture in her grandfather's home and later in the home of her aunt, Mrs. Lou Vernon Dodge.

"Her grandfather, Richard Vernon, told her that Thomas Lincoln made said furniture about the year 1807 and he kept it in his own home until his death when it became the property of his daughter, Mrs. Lou Vernon Dodge, who owned it until her death in the year 1908. When the furniture of Mrs. Lou Vernon Dodge was sold at public auction just following her death this chest was purchased by Mrs. Bettie J. Martin of Elizabethtown, Ky. who has had it in her possession ever since that time.

"Mrs. Churchill further states that she can positively identify the chest as the same piece which was owned in her family for two generations and later by Mrs. Bettie J. Martin as the same piece which her grandfather told her was made by Thomas Lincoln (more than a hundred years ago) and that she knows said piece of furniture has never been out of the possession and ownership of the three parties named herein.

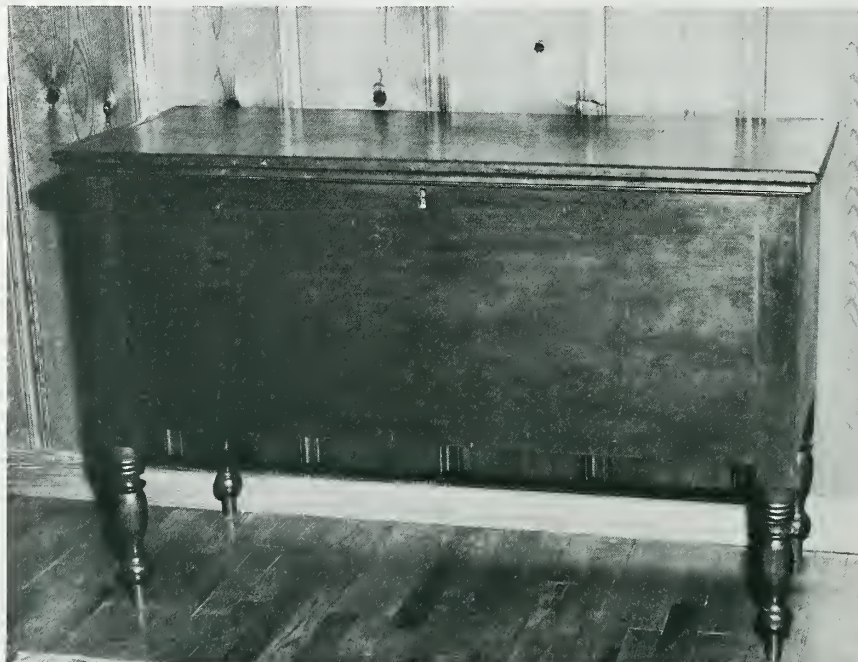
Signed: *Mrs. Emma Churchill*

Subscribed and sworn to before me by Mrs. Emma Churchill this October 17, 1927.

Signed: *L. K. English*

Notary Public Hardin County, Ky.
 My commission expires Feby. 19, 1928"

Mrs. Emma Churchill was the wife of Virgil H. Churchill who, for many years, conducted a jewelry store in Elizabethtown. The family lived on Main Cross Street (now West Dixie Avenue), moved away for some years, returning later to reside on College



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
 Cherry sugar chest owned by J. S. McMurtry, Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, said to have been made by Thomas Lincoln for Mrs. Samuel Haycraft, Sr. of Elizabethtown, Kentucky in 1796 or 1797.

Street, where Mrs. Churchill died. Her aunt, Mrs. Lou Dodge, mentioned in the affidavit, lived in a large residence on West Dixie Avenue, now owned by Mrs. R. V. Wathen. Mrs. Bettie Martin was the mother of Miss Maggie Martin and Mrs. Lawrence Richardson, whose property and household effects were sold on May 19, 1960. At this public auction the cherry hutch was sold to Mrs. L. B. Hoke for \$700.

2. Cherry Day Bed

Another piece of furniture made by Thomas Lincoln for Richard Vernon was a cherry day bed, which was sold at public auction in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, on May 24, 1949. The bed was the property of the late Mary E. Sweets who resided at 212 Mulberry Street. Mr. Howes Meade of Paintsville, Kentucky bought this piece of furniture, the authenticity of which was attested by an affidavit executed by Mrs. Emma Churchill and similar in statement to the one regarding the cherry hutch.

3. Cherry Sugar Chest.

The cherry sugar chest owned by J. S. McMurtry of Lawrenceburg, Kentucky is said to have been made by Thomas Lincoln in 1796 or 1797 for the owner's great-great-grandmother, Margaret, the wife of Samuel Haycraft, Sr. An affidavit affirming the historical authenticity of the sugar chest follows:

Affidavit

"I, Joseph S. McMurtry, hereby certify that I was told by my father, G. E. McMurtry, who was in turn told by his mother, Sarah Maria McMurtry, the daughter of Samuel Haycraft, Jr., the son of Samuel Haycraft, Sr., that this cherry sugar chest was



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Mantlepiece made by Thomas Lincoln in the Lincoln Room of the Armor Center Officer's Open Mess, at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

made for his wife Margaret Van Meter Haycraft during the winter of 1796-1797 at which time Thomas Lincoln was employed by the said Samuel Haycraft, Sr., as a millwright at Haycraft's grist mill at Elizabethtown, Ky.

Signed: J. S. McMurtry

Joseph S. McMurtry

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 24th day of April 1963.

Signed: S. McWilliams, Jr.

Notary Public

My commission expires January 9, 1964."

4. Mantlepiece

The mantlepiece (probably made of pine wood) in the Lincoln Room of the Armor Center Officer's Open Mess at Fort Knox, Kentucky, was taken from a house about one mile north (U.S. 31 W) of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, which was built in 1805 and was originally owned by Hardin Thomas. Samuel Haycraft, Jr., in his book "A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky And Its Surroundings" written in 1869, made the statement that "He (Hardin Thomas) lived in a house rather better than usual for that day, the carpenter's work of which was executed by Thomas Lincoln, the father of the late President; and the most of that work is to be seen at this day, sound as a trout, although done upwards of sixty years ago." The Hardin Thomas house is still standing and is located on the farm of Heady Jenkins, the Elizabethtown Postmaster.

In the fall of 1919, when Camp

Knox was under construction, Major William Radcliffe, a construction quartermaster, lived with his family for a time in Elizabethtown in the home of Mrs. J. F. Albert, a great-grand-daughter of Hardin Thomas. From Mrs. Albert, Major Radcliffe learned of the Hardin Thomas house, and from Mr. B. F. Jenkins he secured for the United States Government the Thomas Lincoln mantlepiece. It was then installed in a building called "The Hostess House" at the army post.

After World War I the post was deactivated. Later on, a civilian who lived on the edge of the reservation thought the mantlepiece was in danger of being destroyed and had it removed from "The Hostess House" which had later become a Station Hospital. Without the authority of the United States Government, the mantlepiece was offered first to the Woman's Club at Elizabethtown on condition that it be installed in the Brown-Pusey Community House. However, Dr. William Allen Pusey, the donor of the community building, declined to let the mantlepiece be installed.

The relic was then offered to the Kentucky Pioneer Memorial Association of Harrodsburg, Kentucky, which readily accepted it. However, while the mantlepiece was on display it was not incorporated in the building known as the Mansion Museum, but was attached to the wall adjoining the Music Room.

In 1934, when the army post was again reactivated, a new Officers' Club was built and Col. J. P. Barney, who

was in command at Fort Knox, learned of the mantlepiece, possibly through construction quartermaster records. He took immediate steps to recover the mantlepiece and his claim to it could not be denied since government money had originally purchased it. Therefore, the mantlepiece came home to Fort Knox and now has a place of honor in what is known as "The Lincoln Room" of the Officer's Mess.

5. Cherry Desk and Bookcase

The cherry desk-bookcase owned by Mr. and Mrs. Townsend Taylor is best described by Forrest Fischer in the *LaPorte Herald-Argus* of April 4, 1949. At the time the article was written the Taylors resided at New Carlisle, Indiana. They are now residents of South Bend, Indiana. A portion of the newspaper article follows:

"Between 1816 and 1830 a farmer and trapper in Rockport, Ind., supplemented his income by building cabinets and furniture.

"His name was Thomas Lincoln, and as he worked tediously with his hands and tools to turn crude cherry wood into desks and cupboards his son, Abraham, watched and offered his help.

"The story of the Taylors' desk since it left the workshop of Tom Lincoln early in the 19th century is an interesting one.

"Rockport is the birthplace of Mr. Taylor, and his family seat. It was there Mr. Taylor's ancestors first obtained the desk and began passing it down from generation to generation.

"During its lifetime the desk has been used as a book case for law books, as a cabinet to store the powders and equipment of a druggist, in



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Cherry desk and bookcase made by Thomas Lincoln and exhibited in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Townsend Taylor of South Bend, Indiana.

the kitchen of a southern Indiana housewife who kept it well stocked with dishes and food, and it finally returned to its designated use as a desk kept carefully polished in the Taylor family at New Carlisle.

"Mr. Taylor tells this story:

"The first practicing doctor in Spencer county, a Dr. Crook, is charged to be the first owner of the desk after it was completed by Thomas Lincoln.

"Dr. Crook used the desk for many years in his office as a writing table, but upon retiring passed the desk on to Judge Thomas DeBruler.

"Judge DeBruler, a well-known attorney in southern Indiana at the time, and a contemporary of Abraham Lincoln, who was practicing law in Springfield, Ill., was Mr. Taylor's great grandfather, according to the story.

"The Judge used the tall cabinet of the desk in which to stack thick, dusty law books. He passed the desk on to Dr. A. D. Garlinghouse, a druggist and doctor in Rockport. Dr. Garlinghouse used the desk as a supply cabinet for medicants and prescriptions.

"As Dr. Garlinghouse's practice grew and he enlarged his office quarters he moved the desk to his residence in Rockport. There his wife, the former . . . Taylor, placed the desk on a screened-in kitchen-porch to use for the storage of food dishes and kitchen utensils.

"According to Mr. Taylor, the Garlinghouses were his grandparents on his mother's side. They donated the desk to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor.

"Although its exact age is not known it is well over 100 years old. The Taylors have received offers from several Lincoln collectors, including the Ford museum, to buy the desk.

"The Taylors, however, vow that they will never sell the desk. Although it is not pretty it is the symbol of early American life and struggle.

"The desk stands about eight feet high from the floor to the top of the cabinet section. The cabinet section is designed as a book case and is enclosed by two glass doors.

"The desk compartments for letters and writing materials are concealed under the desk top which raises up on hinges. There are no drawers in the desk. It is made of solid cherry wood which has never been painted or varnished, the Taylors claim."

6. Cherry Chest of Drawers

The inlaid cherry chest of drawers is without a doubt the most beautiful of all the Thomas Lincoln furniture described in this article. It is now the property of Southern Illinois University, a gift of Philip D. Sang of Chicago, Illinois.

The chest was made by Thomas Lincoln for the Austin family of

Hardin County, Kentucky and later became the property of the Harbolts and Atchers, all of whom are well known families living in the vicinity of Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

An affidavit attesting to its origin follows:

Affidavit

"Mrs. Crit Atcher, being duly sworn, states that according to statements made by the several members of the Atcher family, a cherry, five drawer, inlaid chest of drawers now owned by Bell Smoot of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, was made by Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham Lincoln.

"She further states that according to the statements of the family that the chest was made by Thomas Lincoln for the Austin family. It descended to the Harbolt family and later to the Atcher family who sold it to the present owner, Bell Smoot.

"Mrs. Atcher states that she can identify the chest as the same one sold to Bell Smoot and that the chest has never been out of the ownership and possession of the three families named in the affidavit.

Signed: *Clara Atcher*

May 29, 1960

State of Kentucky
County of Hardin

Subscribed and sworn to before me a Notary Public for the county and State above written.

Signed: *Joe G. Gafford*
Notary Public

My commission expires Dec. 31, 1962."

Mr. Bell Smoot who purchased the chest of drawers had the piece in his possession about forty years before securing the above affidavit. During the entire period that he owned it he was under the impression that the chest had been made by Thomas Lincoln.

There are several other miscellaneous pieces of furniture in Kentucky and Indiana that were made by Thomas Lincoln, but at this late date all the records concerning them have been lost. In fact, the editor knows of several so-called pieces of Thomas Lincoln furniture in Kentucky that have all the earmarks of being genuine, but because they lack authentication they cannot be included in this study.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Inlaid cherry chest of drawers made by Thomas Lincoln and exhibited at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

LINCOLN BOYHOOD NATIONAL MEMORIAL
LINCOLN CITY, INDIANA 47552

February 5, 1987

H3015(LIBO)

Dr. Mark E. Neely, Jr.
Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library
and Museum
1300 S. Clinton Avenue
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801

Dear Mark:

Today we received a letter from Mrs. Howes Meade of Richmond, Kentucky, regarding her plans to dispose of a Thomas Lincoln daybed (see enclosures). We know that you will be interested in this information.

We will send the letter to several museums which may be interested in purchasing this. (This item does not fit the needs -- or budget -- of Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial.)

Our best to you in this special month of Lincoln celebrations.

Sincerely,

Norman D. Hellmers
Superintendent

Enclosures

COPY

LINCOLN BOYHOOD	
FEB 05 '87	
SUPT	
ADMIN	
MAINT	
OPNS	
INTERP	
PROT	
RES MGMT	
SEC	
FILE	

101 Hager Drive
Richmond, KY 40475
February 1, 1987

Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial
Lincoln City, Indiana 47552

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am the owner and have in my possession a day bed made by the father of Abraham Lincoln in the year 1807.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the article published September 19, 1986, by the Courier Journal in Louisville, Kentucky. Endless research has been done to establish the authenticity of this piece of historical furniture.

I plan to move to Arizona to be with my family, and would like to dispose of the day bed. Such a historical piece should be in a public place and I am considering selling it.

I have been invited to display the day bed in an antique mall in Richmond in observance of the birthdays of Lincoln and Washington. I would appreciate hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Howes Meade

Mrs. Howes Meade

Ordinary-looking daybed claims a Lincoln lineage

RICHMOND, Ky. — In the basement of Laura Meade's townhouse sits an old cherry daybed, rather ordinary in appearance, but claiming a history that distinguishes it from nearly all others.

This daybed is said to have been built by Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham Lincoln.

It was bought in 1949 by Meade and her late husband, former U.S. Rep. Howes Meade of Kentucky, during the estate auction of Laura Meade's great-aunt, Mary E. Sweets of Elizabethtown.

"My husband only paid \$500 for it, but it was estimated that it was worth much more," Meade said. "I think people stopped bidding when they saw that some of the family wanted it."

With the daybed came a notarized affidavit, dated 1927, from Emma Churchill, who stated that her grandfather, Richard Vernon, who lived in Hardin County near Elizabethtown, had Thomas Lincoln make several pieces of furniture for him about 1807.

Historical accounts indicate that Lincoln was actively engaged in cabinetmaking, as well as farming, before and after he moved from Kentucky to Indiana in 1816.



**Byron
Crawford**

19 SEP
86

Courier-Journal
columnist

Two of the pieces he made for Vernon, a cherry bed and a chest, were given to Vernon's daughter, Lou Vernon Dodge, who before her death in 1908 gave the bed to her friend, Mary Sweets.

The chest reportedly was sold as part of the Dodge estate, and now the nearly 180-year-old daybed appears ready to change hands again.

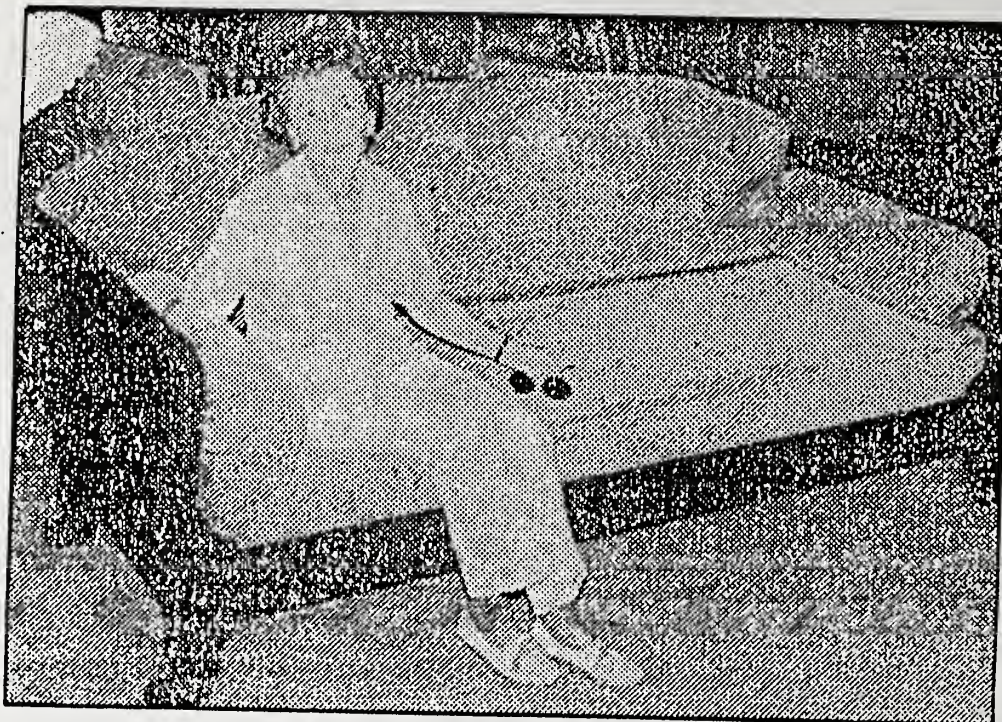
Laura Meade, who is in her 70s and who lost her husband earlier this year, says she is considering moving to Arizona and plans to sell the bed.

"I'd like to see it preserved somewhere where it's appreciated, because I think it's worthy of that," she said. "It's been treasured through the years . . . not for its value as fine furniture, but what's behind it."

Despite a few scratches, the old bed appears to be in fair condition, although it more resembles a couch since the Meades clamped a removable back onto its frame several years ago.

R. G. McMurtry of Fort Wayne, Ind. — a former editor of "Lincoln Lore," the historical bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, and an authority on the Lincolns — believes, on the strength of the affidavit, that the daybed is an authentic Thomas Lincoln piece.

"Being old myself, I knew most of the older people in Elizabethtown," said McMurtry, who was born there. "I don't think you could think of better names to have had on an affidavit than those of the source (Emma Churchill) and the notary public



Staff Photo by Byron Crawford

Laura Meade sat on the cherry daybed that is said to have been built by Thomas Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln's father.

(L. K. English). I think you're about as close (to authentication) as you can get."

It is difficult, he said, to estimate the worth of the daybed.

"I think Thomas Lincoln's business was largely cupboards and buffet-type cabinets," McMurtry explained. "That's the only daybed I ever heard of being made by him."

McMurtry owns a corner cupboard built by Lincoln that he estimates is worth about \$25,000.

He guesses that there are six or seven corner cupboards and an equal number of chests, a few chairs and other pieces that have been authenticated as having been made by Thomas Lincoln, but he believes there are numerous Lincoln pieces that have lost their identity.

"I think there are probably pieces in Elizabethtown that nobody knows who made them, but

probably Thomas Lincoln did," McMurtry said.

Many of Lincoln's pieces were made of cherry, and several were marked with what McMurtry calls a "star and streamer" design, which Lincoln liked.

"He put his inlay on strips, then nailed the strips to the cupboards," McMurtry said. "A 'hole and tooth' was another of his marks ... a little hole, drilled with a sharp drill, with a small piece of maple right by the hole."

Lincoln also carved his initials on some of his furniture, including a cupboard that is part of the J. B. Speed Art Museum collection in Louisville.

"Thomas Lincoln was never the ne'er-do-well he was accused of being," McMurtry said. "I think he was 15th in the payment of taxes in Hardin County. I doubt that he could read very well, but he was industrious and had talent."

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and Louisville Times Co.

OPINIONS

Kentucky woman seeks buyer for Lincoln bed

When someone tells you he has a piece of furniture for sale made by Abraham Lincoln's father, you might ask if the Brooklyn Bridge goes with the deal. Then again, the offer could be legitimate.

Thomas Lincoln was a Kentucky cabinet-maker of some renown in the early 1800s, and documented examples of his work are

EDITOR'S NOTES

by Tom Hoepf, Managing Editor

known. These include cherry spool beds, desks, bookcases, chests, sideboards, kitchen safes and cupboards. Undoubtedly, some of the furniture made by the president's father has lost its identity through the years.

One piece of Thomas Lincoln furniture that appears to have sufficient documentation is a daybed owned by Laura Meade of Kentucky. Her late husband, former U.S. Rep. Howes Meade, purchased the daybed in 1949 for \$500 at the estate auction of Mrs. Meade's great-aunt, Mary E. Sweets, of Elizabethtown, Ky. With the daybed came a notarized affidavit dated 1927 from Emma Churchill, who stated that her grandfather, Richard Vernon, who lived in Hardin County near Elizabethtown, had Thomas Lincoln make several pieces of furniture for him about 1807.

One of the pieces he made for Vernon was a cherry bed, which was given to Vernon's daughter, Lou Vernon Dodge, who before her death in 1908, gave the bed to her friend, Mary Sweets. A chest of drawers made at the same time reportedly was sold with the Dodge estate.

R. Gerald McMurtry of Fort Wayne, Ind., former editor of *Lincoln Lore*, the historical bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, featured the daybed in an arti-



THE DAYBED believed to be made by Thomas Lincoln is pictured with another heirloom, an etching of Abraham Lincoln by T. Johnson.

cle about Thomas Lincoln's furniture in that publication in February 1964. A native of Elizabethtown, McMurtry knew the people who signed and notarized the affidavit, and has little doubt about its authenticity.

The July 1969 issue of *Lincoln Lore* contains a brief article that states Thomas Lincoln was said to have one of the best sets of carpenter's tools in Hardin County, and perhaps the best set in pioneer southern Indiana, where the family later moved. A review of the Bleakley & Montgomery ledgers, a mercantile business in Elizabethtown from 1804 to 1808, indicates Thomas Lincoln occasionally bought tools and supplies for his carpenter and cabinetmaking needs. Included in the list were a casteel saw, plane bit, file, foot adze, shoe knife, gimlet, sandpaper and screws.

McMurtry also wrote in the July 1969 issue of *Lincoln Lore* that it is difficult to dis-

cover any stylistic trends in construction that would enable a person to determine what is and what is not a genuine product of Thomas Lincoln's workshop. Only one Lincoln piece, a corner cupboard owned by the J.B. Speed Memorial Museum in Louisville, Ky., is known to be signed, "T. L. 1814."

Although few pieces of his furniture have inlaid designs, four cupboards constructed by Lincoln indicate that he preferred the dental or "hole and tooth" inlay along with a design called "star and streamer," noted McMurtry.

Mrs. Meade's daybed, which is void of inlaid designs, is now in the hands of Joanne Hobbs, an antique dealer from Hodgenville, Ky. Hobbs learned of the daybed through Byron Crawford, a newspaper columnist for the *Courier-Journal* in Louis-

(continued from page 3)

